

Fire Safety in Health Care Facilities

Office of the
State Fire Marshal
<http://www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/firemars.htm>



Guidelines for fire prevention and life safety in Health Care Facilities

Many patients in health-care facilities have special needs that make them especially vulnerable in a fire emergency.

1

Prevention:

- ☐ Smoking – If smoking is allowed, post smoking rules in common areas and apply them to everyone, patients, staff, all workers and guests. Smoking must be prohibited in areas where oxygen is in use or is stored.
- ☐ Keep combustibles like paper, linens and clothing away from heat sources.
- ☐ Secure gas cylinders away from patients. Be certain cylinder caps are in place when cylinders are not in use.
- ☐ Keep maintenance and storage areas clean and free of trash and combustibles.
- ☐ Halls and stairways should be clear.
- ☐ Be sure the EXIT signs are always lighted and that emergency lighting is in working order.
- ☐ Never prop open emergency doors. Closed doors help stop fire and smoke from spreading.
- ☐ Equipment – Check and maintain all equipment on a regularly scheduled basis. Staff should check and report any cracked or split cords or plugs on the equipment they use.

2

Be Prepared: All health-care facilities should have a complete emergency plan, and regular drills should be held to ensure that employees know what to do in a fire or other emergency.

- ☐ Staff should know the location of fire alarms in their work area, and should be trained to operate them in the dark.
- ☐ Staff should know the location of portable fire extinguishers in their work areas and know and when to use them.
- ☐ Staff should know how to shut off oxygen and other piped gas systems, if instructed to do so.

3

In the Event of Fire: Patients and their families have trusted your health-care facility with the safety of people who, in many cases, cannot help themselves. Each staff member carries the responsibility of ensuring the safety of patients, staff, and visitors. If a fire breaks out, stay calm to set an example for patients.

- ☐ Report the fire following the health-care facility's procedures and policies
- ☐ Move patients who are in immediate danger away from smoke or flames.
- ☐ Close the doors of patient's rooms and any other doors to slow the spread of fire and smoke.
- ☐ After the area has been evacuated and the fire reported, attempt to extinguish the fire. If you know how to operate a fire extinguisher, try to extinguish the fire only if it is small, confined and easily extinguished.

Reference: "Fire Safety in the Nursing Home" *Instructors Guide*, Washington Office of the State Fire Marshal, 1997, "Fire Safety in Health-Care Facilities", National Fire Protection Association